

**Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

Minutes September 16, 2011

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, September 16, 2011, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Halverson, Merrigan, Perrus, Reveal, Thao, Wencl; and Messrs. Commers, Connolly, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, Schertler, Spaulding, Ward, and Wickiser.

Commissioners Absent: Mmes. *Porter, *Wang, and *Young.
*Excused

Also Present: Allan Torstenson, Lucy Thompson, Kate Reilly, Sarah Zorn, Ryan Kelley, Merritt Clapp-Smith, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes September 2, 2011.

MOTION: *Commissioner Ward moved approval of the minutes of September 2, 2011. Commissioner Merrigan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Commers noted that the track for what will become the LRT Green Line on University Avenue was moved west to the city limits at Emerald Street the previous night.

He announced that over the next month or so he will be part of a group working with the Riverfront Development Corporation to consider creation of a Saint Paul Urban Design Festival, and will keep the Planning Commission posted.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Allan Torstenson, Principal City Planner filling in for the Planning Director, announced that the District 9 Commercial Zoning Study and the District 9 Residential Zoning Study were both given final approval by the City Council.

IV. Zoning Committee

SITE PLAN REVIEW – List of current applications. *(Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)*

One item came before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, September 13, 2011:

Mississippi Market Parking Lot, 622 Selby, expansion of parking lot onto 633 Hague lot (related to proposed house demolition and rezoning of 633 Hague).

Four items to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, September 20, 2011:

- Rick Thorn office/apartments mixed use building, 1440 Roblyn Avenue;
- PPL 44 unit apartment building revised site plan, 2236 West 7th Street;
- Furness Parkway trail extension, new trail from Larpenteur to Hoyt and Ivy to Maryland; and
- Ordway Center expansion preliminary review, 345 Washington Street.

NEW BUSINESS

#11-264-892 Audrey and John Malone – Reestablishment of nonconforming use as a one-family home. 1517 Randolph Avenue, NE corner at Saratoga. (Sarah Zorn, 651/266-6570)

Commissioner Kramer said that the house is nonconforming in the B1 business district, has been vacant for a period of time, and has lost its legal-nonconforming status. The nonconforming use permit is to allow reuse of the house as a single family home.

MOTION: Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the reestablishment of legal nonconforming use. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

#11-265-812 Mississippi Market (Selby Ave) – Rezoning from RM2 Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential to B2 Community Business. 633 Hague Ave., between Dale and St. Albans. (Kate Reilly, 651/266-6618)

Commissioner Kramer reported that this rezoning is to provide for expanded parking for Mississippi Market.

MOTION: Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning. The motion carried with 17 in favor and 1 abstention (Spaulding) on a voice vote.

Commissioner Kramer announced that the next scheduled Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, September 22, 2011, has been cancelled.

V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Industrial Zoning Study – Approve resolution recommending the initiation of a zoning study. (Penelope Simison, 651/266-6554)

Commission Merrigan said that they had met on Tuesday and discussed the initiation of an Industrial Zoning Study. The short resolution was not included in the commissioner's packets, so Commissioner Merrigan read the resolution and reported that the Comprehensive Planning Committee unanimously recommends initiation of the study.

MOTION: *Commissioner Merrigan moved the Comprehensive Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution initiating an industrial zoning study. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Commissioner Merrigan announced that the next meeting is on Tuesday, September 27, 2011.

VI. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Shepard Davern Residential Redevelopment Overlay District Amendment – Approve resolution recommending adoption by the Mayor and City Council. (*Patricia James, 651/266-6639*)

Commissioner Wencl reported that the City Council has introduced an ordinance to reduce the minimum site size in the Shepard Davern residential redevelopment overlay district from 2 acres to 1 acre, consistent with the Shepard Davern commercial redevelopment overlay district, and referred it to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation. She explained the committee's finding that the proposed 1 acre site size would be consistent with the Shepard Davern Gateway Area Plan, an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan and recommendation to delete the requirement entirely rather than just reducing it.

Chair Commers noted that the City Council will be holding a public hearing on the proposed amendment.

MOTION: *Commissioner Wencl moved the Neighborhood Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution finding that the proposed Shepard Davern Residential Redevelopment Overlay District amendment reducing the minimum site size would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and recommending deleting the requirement entirely rather than just reducing it. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Solar Energy Systems Zoning Text Amendments - Approve resolution recommending adoption by the Mayor and City Council. (*Kate Reilly, 651/266-6618, and Allan Torstenson, 651/266-6579*).

Commissioner Wencl said that the resolution was not in their packets, but it is in front of them today.

MOTION: *Commissioner Wencl moved the Neighborhood Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution that the Solar Energy Systems Zoning Text Amendments be adopted by the Mayor and City Council. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Commissioner Wencl announced the items on the agenda for the next Neighborhood Committee meeting on Wednesday, September 21, 2011.

VII. Introduction to Form-Based Coding – Presentation by Bob Kost, Director of Planning & Design, SEH Inc., and Lucy Thompson, Principal City Planner.

Chair Commers made introductory comments about form-based coding as a different strategy for land use and urban design regulation, an alternative to Euclidean zoning that Saint Paul and most

cities use. The reason for this presentation is to become more literate and begin a discussion about form-base coding.

Lucy Thompson, PED staff, explained that Euclidean Zoning is separates use by district, originally developed mostly as a tool to separate noxious industrial uses from residential areas. Saint Paul adopted its first zoning code in 1922. It has evolved and adapted to address changing needs and issues over time, seeking quality while maintaining flexibility. Our Traditional Neighborhood Districts were adopted in 2004, with more flexibility for mixed-use development, design standards, and a stronger focus on form and design. Now we are looking at ways to further integrate land use with sustainability, infrastructure and the public realm, and form-based coding is a tool to consider.

Bob Kost, Director of Planning and Urban Design at SEH, said form-based coding is a type of development regulation intended to create a predictable public realm through the physical definition of urban form. Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets, blocks and open space. They are more about form, and less about use and density. They are not about architectural style.

Form-based codes commonly include elements or sections on administration, a regulating plan, building form standards, street and public space standards, and definitions. They are based on components of time-tested urbanism: walkable, non-auto dominated, human scaled, classically proportioned buildings, well defined and articulated public realm, vertically and horizontally integrated mix of uses, and interconnected green spaces of varied size and purpose.

Form-based codes are typically developed using a participatory charrette process to create a community vision and master plan with supportive elements necessary to implement the vision. Form-based codes are typically done for a specific site and address determinants of community form, block and lot size, solar orientation, streets, design and placement of building, building type, use, on- and off street parking, parks and open space, landscaping, screening ecological restoration and signs. A number of these elements are addressed in the City's current code, but are spread out across zoning, site plan review, subdivision ordinance, sign code, etc. Form-based codes are more descriptive and specific than Euclidian zoning. Utilizing diagrams, photos, tables and text keyed to a specific regulating plan that designates the appropriate typology, form and scale of buildings, streets and open spaces, and character of development.

There are different types of form-based codes:

- Frontage type, focusing on the public space, well suited for corridors and districts.
- Building type, focusing more on building typologies and street typologies, well suited for sub-districts and individual sites.
- The "Smart Code" based on "transects" that transition from natural areas (T1) to the urban core (T6). The transects provide for a context-based approach to apply character regulations across whole communities and neighborhoods.

Mr. Kost presented an example of form-based coding he worked on in Casper, Wyoming, with a vision to create a walkable neighborhood, respecting the area's history, offering a variety of uses such as shops, restaurants, offices, hotels, choices of housing types and prices, parks, trails, and

schools within a safe and attractive environment. The Casper form-based code is place-based, reflecting context and transect geography, with a typological approach to buildings and streets. It emphasizes form over use, is graphically fun and easy to use.

Lucy Thompson, PED staff, said they are not exploring form-based coding with a preconceived notion that it should be used in Saint Paul, but are looking at it with some key goals:

- Quality development while maintaining flexibility;
- Match zoning and regulatory tools with development opportunities; and
- Integrate land use with building form, the public realm, and sustainability.

Merritt Clapp-Smith, PED staff, discussed studies of the Ford site since the five-scenarios were developed, the most recent being a study of how to achieve sustainability goals on the site. Consultants suggested looking at form-based coding as a potential tool. She explained that they have little experience with form-based codes and don't know if it would be the right tool.

There will be additional presentations on form-based coding at the next Planning Commission meeting. Michael Orange, a retired planner for the City of Minneapolis, will discuss potential tools in Saint Paul's existing zoning regulations and form-based coding to achieve sustainability goals. Peter Musty, one of the consultants on the Ford sustainability study, will give his perspective on why he thinks form-based coding might be an appropriate tool to achieve sustainability goals for the Ford site. Ms. Clapp-Smith said they have submitted an application to Metropolitan Council for a Livable Communities Development grant for a zoning evaluation for the Ford site. They will know in January if they get the grant.

Commissioner Reveal asked about cities using form-based coding next to conventional zoning.

Mr. Kost said that is the most common application of a form-based coding. Most cities that use form-based coding embed it in their conventional zoning ordinance. City-wide form-based codes are less common

Commissioner Reveal asked about the process to do that.

Mr. Kost said it would be the same process as for a creating a planned unit development or to do any change to the zoning code.

Ms. Thompson noted that the Capital Area, which has its own zoning authority, adopted a frontage type form-based code when they recently updated their zoning code.

Commissioner Ward asked about examples of cities like Saint Paul that have adopted and implemented form-based coding and have a track record to show the difference before and after form-based coding, and how the community has accepted it.

Mr. Kost said he doesn't have that at hand but can get it. Form-based coding has been used in Albuquerque, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. The largest form-based code effort in the country was a complete rewrite of the Miami zoning code using form-based coding for the entire city. Ms. Thompson added that there is a Form-Base Code Institute that can be googled for information, and form-based codes from various cities can be downloaded.

Commissioner Oliver asked about administration of form-based codes, Smart Codes under which almost everything is administratively approved, and how it works in Casper.

Mr. Kost said generally the idea is to try to get as many things figured out and set up for administrative approval as possible to streamline development. In Casper, only major changes to the plan need to go to the Planning Commission or City Council.

Commissioner Merrigan commented that as an architect she is a bit leery of form-based coding. Architecture is a tool, not an end, and we need to look beyond “style and statement.” Form-based coding has many positives: addressing relationships in urban form, relationships between buildings, streets, and public spaces. It can provide for predictable urban form, but predictability can be negative as well as positive. We need to be careful to avoid a code that is too prescriptive, with too many pre-determined drawings included in the code that leave us to decorate boxes whether they are on tree-lined Summit Avenue or bustling University Avenue, pictures that are interchangeable in Denver, Houston or Miami and harken back to a nostalgic Disneyfied middle class main street that may or may not have ever existed. Such a form may not take into account or reflect the evolution of new and diverse communities and needs. Overly prescriptive form-based coding may not have allowed new building forms and development that helped create some of the midwest’s most magnificent urban places.

Ms. Thompson recalled that an early draft of the traditional neighborhood regulations had drawings to illustrate massing and relationships between buildings and streets that tended to cause confusion, with people asking if it has to look exactly like that. There were also issues with the code service the city uses in getting drawings into the code.

Commissioner Ochs said he looks forward to exploring form-based coding and thinking about it with respect to places like Lowertown.

VIII. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Spaulding announced the items on the agenda for the next Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, September 19, 2011.

IX. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no report.

X. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Oliver reported on the Near East Side Task Force meeting and a subcommittee study of commercial buildings in the area. Their next meeting is on Tuesday, October 11, 2011. An open house for review of their ideas and a branding initiative is planned for Wednesday, October 5, 2011, at the Dayton’s Bluff Community Council Office.

XI. Old Business

None

XII. New Business

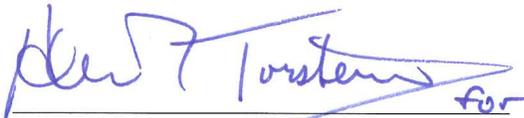
None

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

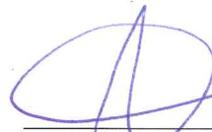


Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved

9-30-11

(Date)



Anthony Fernandez
Secretary of the Planning Commission